



U.S. Department of Education
Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools



Conducting Effective Emergency Management Tabletops, Drills and Other Exercises

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Presentation Goals

- I. Discuss why schools should conduct emergency exercises
- II. Connect exercises to the four phases of emergency management (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery)
- III. Overview of five types of emergency exercises
- IV. Suggest community and federal support resources
- V. Discuss how to build a successful exercise design continuum
- VI. Share best practices in conducting exercises
- VII. Conduct an interactive activity
- VIII. Highlight exercise safety procedures
- IX. Discuss after-action reviews
- X. Share common exercise mistakes
- XI. Provide resources for further planning





Presentation Goals

- I. Discuss why schools should conduct emergency exercises





I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises

1. Clarify roles and responsibilities
2. Evaluate plans and procedures
3. Develop effective agency relationships
4. Assess resources and capabilities
5. Identify needs and solutions
6. Provides significant benefits to school and community
7. States have legislation requiring school exercises and drills

Many emergency management agencies and other accredited public safety agencies must conduct various types of exercises on an annual basis.





I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

- Most states require by law a specific number of **fire drills** to be conducted in schools, often on a monthly basis.
- Several states mandate schools to hold **lockdown drills** several times per year (e.g., *Alabama, Minnesota, Rhode Island*), while others recommend the practice (e.g., *Arkansas, Georgia, Illinois*).
- According to a June 2007 General Accounting Office (GAO) report, *Emergency Management: Most School Districts Have Developed Emergency Management Plans, but Would Benefit from Additional Federal Guidance* (GAO-07-609), a national survey of school districts showed an estimated 73 percent regularly conduct a drill or exercise to prepare for emergency situations relating to evacuation, lockdown, or shelter-in-place.





I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

- Some states require schools hold other types of drills:
 - Shelter-in-place drills once per year (e.g., Arizona, Illinois) or Duck, cover, and hold drills quarterly (e.g., California)
 - Extreme weather drills twice per year (e.g., Alabama)
 - Tornado drills quarterly (e.g., Arkansas) or yearly (e.g., North Carolina, Virginia)
 - Earthquake drills monthly (e.g., Hawaii)
 - Crisis response drills once per year (e.g., Delaware)
 - Bomb drills twice per year (e.g., Georgia)
 - Bus evacuation drills once per year (e.g., Illinois)
- Other states leave the prescription of drills entirely to the local or school district level (e.g., Florida, Colorado).





I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

The benefits are clear:

- Greater consistency of response
- More efficient use of resources
- Increased confidence in students, staff and parents
- Stronger relationships with partners





I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)



An Alarmist

**A
Complacent
Individual**

Everyone Should Be Here

Proactive Liability Management

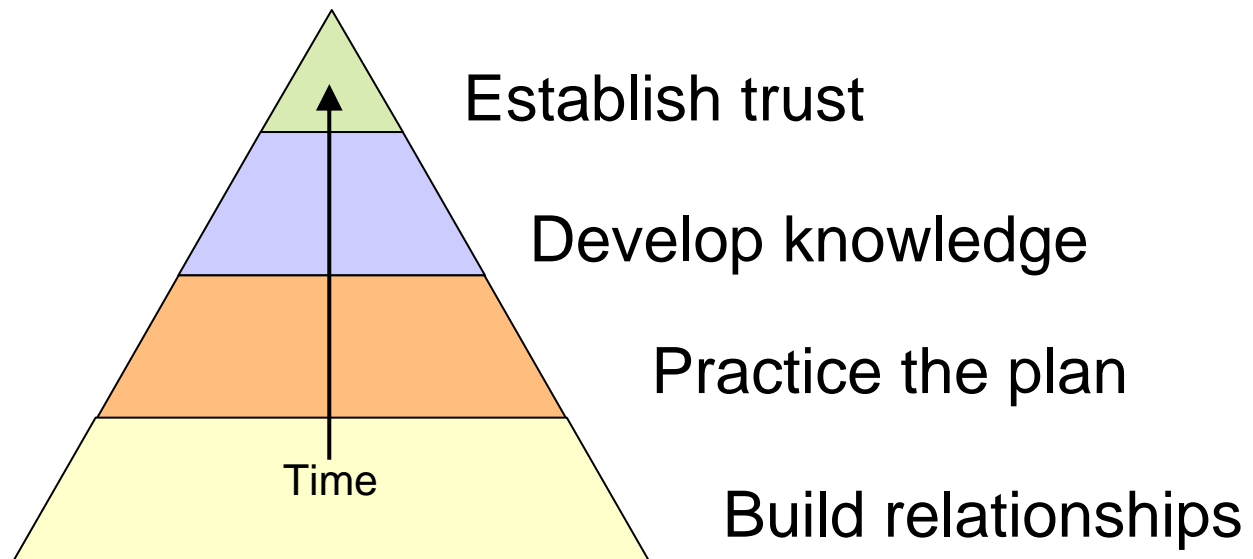




I. Why Schools Should Conduct Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)

A key to effective emergency response in schools is exercising the balance between flexibility and consistency that is best developed through an exercise design continuum.

Flexibility ← Good Judgment → Consistency





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II. Connect Exercises to the Four Phases of Emergency Management

Exercises are a core element of the Preparedness phase of emergency management; however, an effective exercise program impacts each phase of the cycle.

Exercises:

- Point out vulnerabilities to address in the Prevention-Mitigation phase.
- Allow partners to practice a Response that can help ensure a smooth and efficient response in an actual crisis.
- Demonstrate what resources may be needed during the Recovery phase.





Presentation Goals

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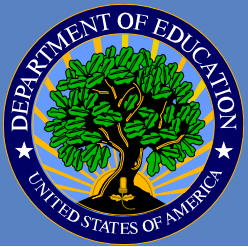




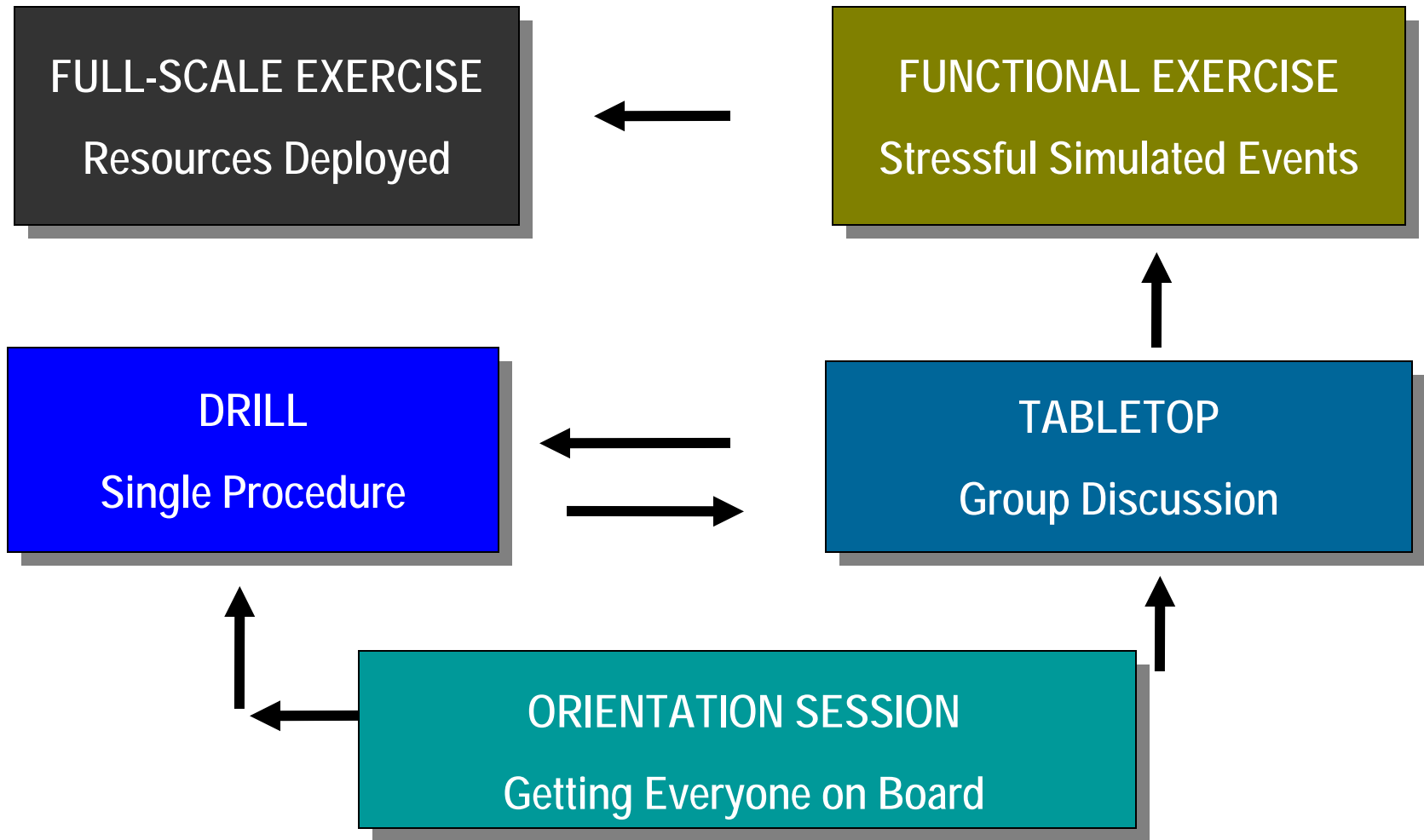
III. Types of Emergency Exercises

- 1. Orientation Sessions:** Inform about emergency operations plans and emergency procedures (*lasts one to two hours, takes two or more days to plan*)
- 2. Drills:** Perfect an individual emergency procedure (*lasts 30 min. to two hours, takes up to three days to plan*)
- 3. Tabletop Exercises:** Identify roles/responsibilities in different scenarios (*lasts one to four hours, takes one or more months to plan*)
- 4. Functional Exercises:** Roundtable simulation of emergency situation with realistic timeline (*lasts three to eight hours, takes three months to plan*)
- 5. Full-scale Exercises:** Multiagency, on-site simulation of an emergency situation; all resources deployed (*lasts multiple days, takes six or more months to plan*)





III. Types of Emergency Exercises (Cont'd.)





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Orientation Session

What is an orientation session?

- Orientation sessions are the initial meeting to discuss a topic or a problem in a group setting and introduce all potential participants to the exercise continuum process as well as emergency response procedures.
- An orientation session is:
 - A low-stress, informal discussion with little or (typically) no simulation;
 - Similar to many briefings that school personnel conduct on a variety of topics; and
 - Comparable to seminars held by emergency management agencies.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Orientation Session (Cont'd.)

Why hold an orientation session?

- Introduce something new (i.e., policies and plans, emergency operations center, etc.)
- Explain existing plans, procedures, and updates to stakeholders
- Introduce a *multi-event continuum* to prepare participants and stakeholders for success in more complex exercises
- Motivate people for participation in subsequent exercises
- Identify those who are critical of the need to plan for and practice emergency situations and, if appropriate, involve them
- Emphasize emergency management link to school mission, money, Annual Yearly Progress, and community responsibility





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Orientation Session (Cont'd.)

Who is involved in an orientation session?

- School administration
- The school or district's emergency response team and potentially the Incident Commander and/or general staff of the school's Incident Command System
- Lead facilitator
- Stakeholders:
 - Teachers, support staff, substitute teachers;
 - Students, if appropriate;
 - Parent groups, if appropriate; and
 - Local emergency response agency representatives or other key external partners.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Orientation Session (Cont'd.)

What is needed to conduct an orientation session?

- A facility with minimal distractions
- Specific outcome goals for the session
- A clear justification for why the school will be engaging in the upcoming drills and exercises
- Explicit support from school and district administration
- A realistic timeline for upcoming exercise activities as well as explanation of how these will impact instructional time
- Description of agencies involved and what their roles will be
- Presentation materials
- Advanced consideration for how to address skeptics' concerns or challenges





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise

What is a tabletop exercise?

- A tabletop exercise is a facilitated analysis of an emergency situation in an informal, stress-free environment.
- Tabletops should be designed to elicit *constructive* discussion as participants examine and resolve problems based on existing operational plans and identify where those plans need to be refined.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a tabletop exercise?

- Provides opportunity for **low-stress discussion** of coordination and policy within the school and/or between the school and other agencies
- Offers a good environment for **problem solving**
- Provides an opportunity for key agencies and stakeholders to become **acquainted** with one another, their interrelated roles, and their respective responsibilities
- Promotes good **preparation for a functional exercise**





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Who is involved with a tabletop exercise?

- The objectives of the exercise dictate who should participate.
- The exercise can involve many people and many organizations—but at a minimum, those performing key response roles should be involved.
- A skilled, objective facilitator who can maintain group focus and constructive dialogue is vital.
- A scribe is helpful—as can be the reflections of “observers” from multiple agencies.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

What is needed for a tabletop exercise?

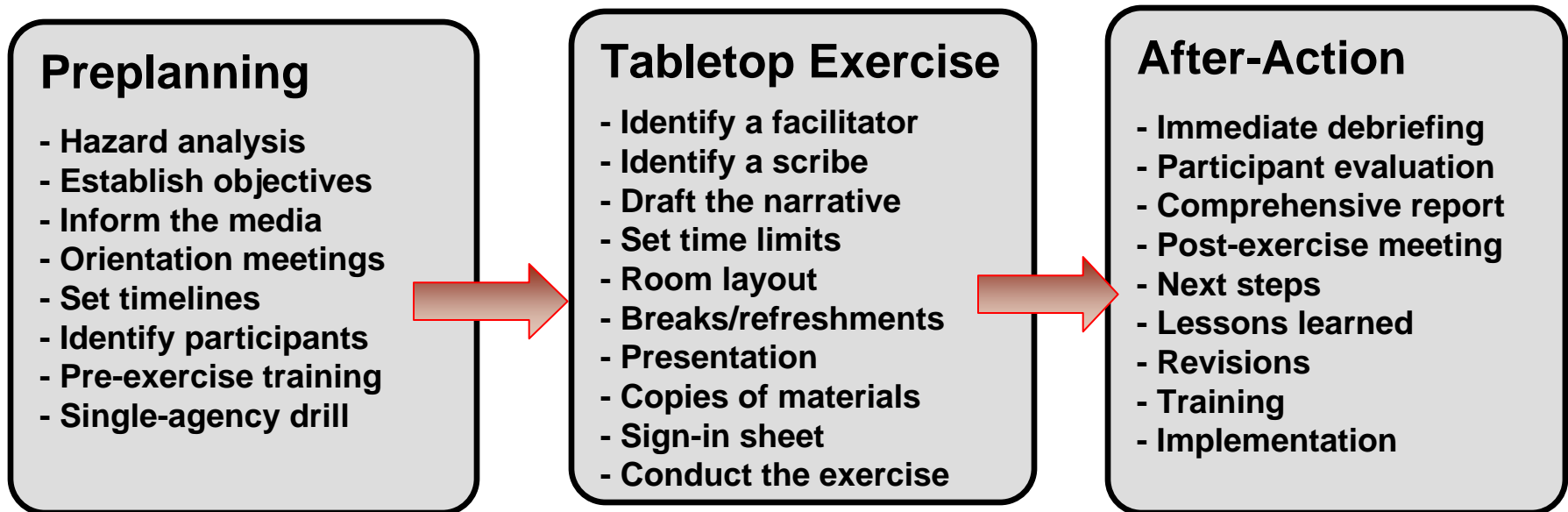
- A facility with minimal distractions
- Specific outcome goals for the exercise
- Facilitator, participants, scribe, observers (optimal)
- Projector, flip chart, or board
- Records of previous orientation sessions and drills (are valuable)
- A short narrative, which sets the stage for the hypothetical emergency
- Problem statements describing /summarize major or detailed events to keep the group focused—may be addressed either to individual participants or to participating departments or agencies
- Simulated messages that are interjected into the discussion to add additional and necessary complexity





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Example: Phases of Tabletop Development



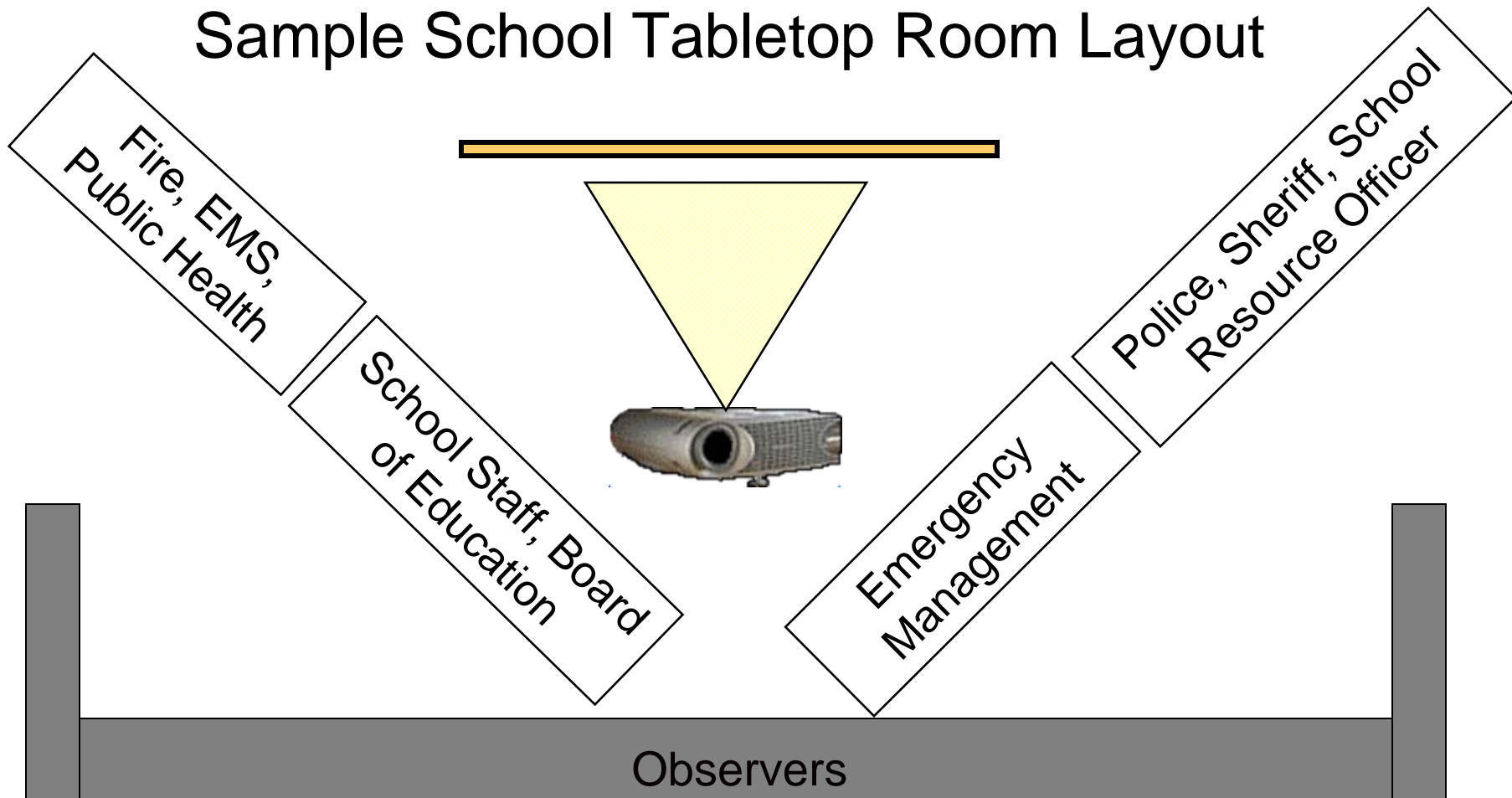
Developing a tabletop exercise takes more than one month to plan. The event typically lasts one to four hours.

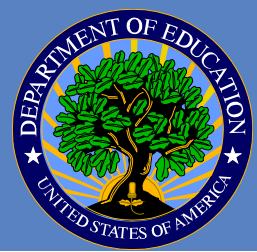




III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Tabletop Exercise (Cont'd.)

Sample School Tabletop Room Layout





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill

What is a drill?

A coordinated, supervised exercise activity, normally used to test a **single** specific operation or function.

- Schools commonly conduct fire evacuation drills, but a comprehensive approach to emergency management requires practicing many other procedures as well (e.g., control of infectious disease, shelter-in-place, etc.), and under a variety of conditions.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a drill?

- To practice and perfect one small part of the response plan
- To prepare for more extensive exercises in which several functions will be coordinated and tested
- To focus on a single, relatively limited portion of the overall emergency management system
- To practice and maintain current skills
- To provide training with new equipment
- To develop new policies or procedures





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

Who is involved in a drill?

Participation is driven and limited by the nature of the response procedure being tested but may involve one or more of the following groups:

- Administration;
- Teachers and support staff;
- Students;
- Parent and other community groups; and
- An emergency response agency.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

What is needed to conduct a drill?

- Clearly outlined, specific and measurable goals and objectives for the drill.
- A general briefing session on the drill's purpose.
- Advanced notification to parents, guardians, and the surrounding community.
- Relevant equipment.
- An evaluator.
- After-action review meeting and report.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Drill (Cont'd.)

Drill Considerations

- Coordinate with school and local public safety; have them observe or participate
- Follow your district or school procedures
- Make the drills realistic, but do so safely
- Test warning and notification procedures
- Block normal routes to force staff to make critical decisions
- Plan for students, staff and visitors with special needs
- Test accountability procedures (use the visitor log or other systems)
- Consider student release procedures during certain drills
- Debrief the same day with your teachers and staff





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise

What is a functional exercise?

- The functional exercise simulates an emergency in the most realistic manner possible, short of moving real people, equipment, and resources to an actual site. As the name suggests, its goal is to test or evaluate the capability of one or more functions in the context of an emergency event.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a functional exercise?

- Tests one or more functions and exercises of several agencies or departments **without incurring the costs** of a full-scale exercise
- **Tests multiple functions** of the school / district's emergency management plan
- Simulates an incident in the **most realistic manner** possible short of moving resources to an actual site
- Is **highly interactive**, moderately stressful, requires quick decision making



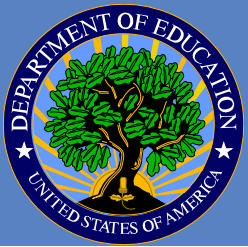


III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise (Cont'd.)

Who is involved in a functional exercise?

- **Controller:** Manages and directs the exercise
- **Players:** Respond as in a real emergency (should include policymakers; may include coordinators and operational personnel directing field activities)
- **Simulators:** Assume external roles and deliver planned messages to the players
- **Evaluators:** Assess performance through observation





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Functional Exercise (Cont'd.)

What is needed to conduct a functional exercise?

Setup

- Gather people where they would actually operate in an emergency
- Seat players and simulators in separate areas or rooms
- Achieve realism using telephones, radios, televisions, and maps
- Use carefully scripted and timed messages/"injects"





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise

What is a full-scale exercise?

- A full-scale exercise is as close to a real crisis as possible. It is a lengthy exercise which takes place on location, using the equipment, personnel, and resources that would be called upon in a real event. It typically tests multiple operational components of the school's emergency plan.





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

Why conduct a full-scale exercise?

- Simulates a real event as closely as possible—the ultimate test of functions
- Evaluates the *operational* capability of emergency management systems in a highly stressful environment that simulates actual response conditions
- Activates the ICS / EOC
- Coordinates the actions of several entities
- Tests several emergency functions
- Is an excellent learning exercise
- Utilizes same personnel "roles" as functional exercise—but now includes "victims"





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

Who is involved in a full-scale exercise?

- School staff
- Students
- Relevant district staff and board members
- Community partners
 - Identify which organizations need to be involved to carry out the functions being tested and which organizational representatives should be there
- First responders (police, fire, EMT)
- Emergency management agency (city, county, state)
- Parents/guardians
- Evaluators





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

What is needed for a full-scale exercise?

- Time to plan—may require six to eight months to develop a comprehensive, full scale exercise
- Completion of a logical sequence of the orientation sessions, drills, and functional exercises prior is key
- Involvement of media on scene
- A realistic location selection





III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

What factors are needed for a full-scale exercise?

- Needs assessment
- Design team formation
- Scope, purpose, objective definitions on paper
- Scenario development
- Controller, evaluator, player, simulator identification
- Secure location for guests / observers (with audio & video if possible)
- Master scenario events list and message development
- Materials, supplies, enhancements, such as props
- Evaluation form development
- Prior execution of preliminary orientation, tabletop, drill, functional exercise
- Compiled media / parent information
- After-action review and then report



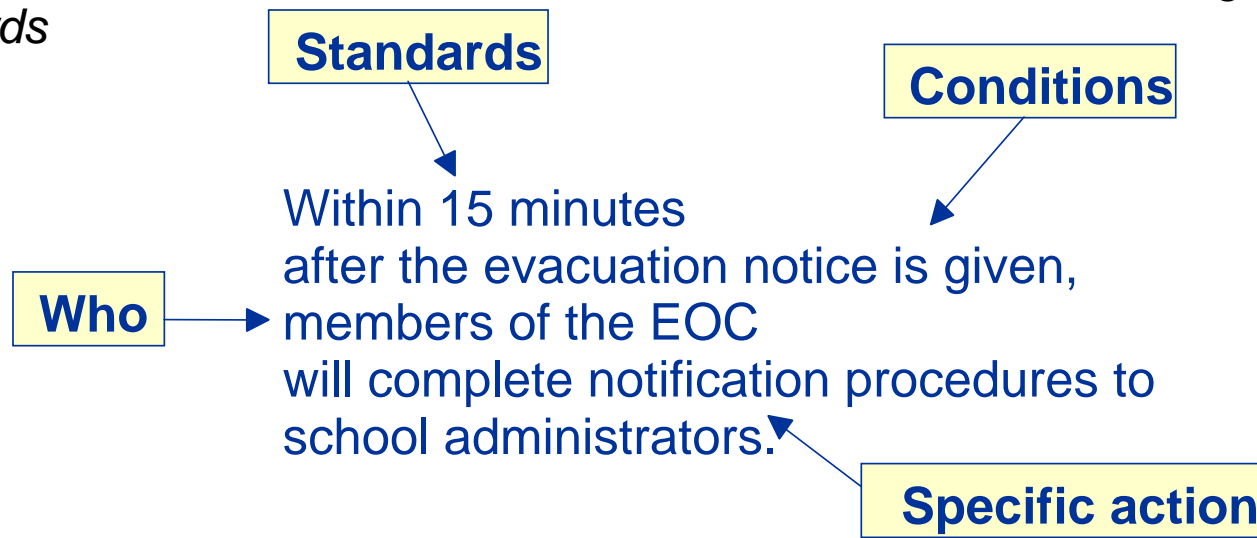


III. Types of Emergency Exercises: Full-scale Exercise (Cont'd.)

For a successful full-scale exercise:

An objective is key

- Should describe performance expected from participants to demonstrate competence
- Should be clear, concise, focused on participant performance
- Should state *who* should do *what* under *what conditions* according to *what standards*





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IV. Support Resources

- Local Emergency Management Agency (LEMA)
- Local Public Safety Agencies
- School District Personnel
- School Resource Officer
- Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)*
- State and Local Homeland Security Agencies
- Victim Services
- Faith-Based Organizations

** A LEPC is a committee that is comprised of members from government, industry and elected officials who are involved in emergency planning activities in a community. Check with your local emergency manager.*





IV. Support Resources (Cont'd.)

U.S. Department of Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

- This is a program that promotes a national standard for Homeland Security exercises.
- It is focused on capabilities, performance, evaluation and improvement planning.
- An evaluation program is a requirement to receive Department of Homeland Security funding.
- Local and state public safety agencies will typically guide you through the process.
- More information, tool kit and templates available at <https://hseep.dhs.gov>

(The HSEEP site is a secure site—a password request may be sent to support@hseep.net to access resources.)





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- V. Discuss how to build a successful exercise design continuum





V. Building a Successful Exercise Design Continuum

1. Based on the **needs assessment**, elect one of your school's main vulnerabilities
2. With response agencies, **set a date** six to eight months in advance for a full-scale exercise based on that vulnerability
3. Designate a **design team leader** and **exercise design team**—or ensure there is a central school liaison who is part of the *external agency* design team
4. From that date, back into an **orientation session**
5. Determine which procedures will be utilized in the full-scale exercise, then schedule a series of **drills** that separately address each one
6. After several such drills, schedule two to three **tabletops**
7. Hold a **functional exercise**
8. Execute the **full-scale exercise**
9. *Hold **after-action** reviews throughout*
10. *Implement the **evaluation** results throughout*





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- VI. Share best practices in conducting exercises

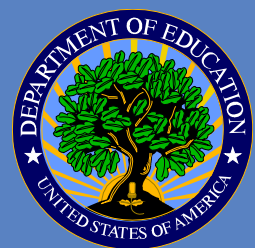




VI. Best Practices in Conducting Exercises

- Practice a variety of different scenarios based upon risks in the school and community:
 - Utilize hazard / vulnerability data; and
 - Collaborate with disaster and emergency services.
- Practice a variety of different response procedures, such as lockdown, shelter-in-place, evacuation.
- Communicate information in advance (with parents, media and surrounding neighborhoods as appropriate).
- Evaluate and document lessons learned in an after-action report.
- Implement exercise outcome recommendations.
- Test the capacity of all agencies—not just schools.





VI. Best Practices in Conducting Exercises (Cont'd.)

- Drill under different conditions (time, weather, pull key people such as the building engineer).
- Identify weaknesses and areas for improvement
- Build design succession of exercises to instill feelings of “success.”
- Make sure that one objective is to implement the Incident Command System to be compliant with National Incident Management System and to better integrate with local response agencies.
- The goals of an exercise are NOT achieved UNTIL the recommendations from the after–action review are implemented.





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- VI. Share best practices in conducting exercises
- VII. Conduct an interactive activity





VII. Interactive Activity

Work in groups:

- Identify a high-priority vulnerability.
- Using the exercise continuum:
 - Define date, scenario, and key partners for a full scale exercise;
 - Determine procedures/functions that will be tested;
 - Create a concise purpose for the event; and
 - Map out three drills, one tabletop scenario and one functional exercise that address those functions.





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VIII. Exercise Safety Procedures

- Conduct a **safety briefing**
- Establish a code word to cease the exercise
- Have “non-players” identified
- Establish a check-in area
- Designate a **safety officer**
- Mark **observer/evaluator areas**
- Obtain vests for observer/evaluators
- Identify weapons cleared for exercise
- Utilize “Exercise in Progress” **signage**
- Obtain **radios** for exercise control team
- **Provide** the media and nearby neighborhoods / business with **pre- and post-event information**





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- IX. Discuss after-action reviews





IX. After-action Review

What is an After-action Review?

- After-action reviews **capture key lessons learned** from emergency response and make recommendations for improvements.
- **Components of after-action reviews:**
 - Conduct exercise / emergency activities overview;
 - Relevance of goals and objectives;
 - Analysis of outcomes;
 - Analysis of capacity to perform critical tasks;
 - Recommendations;
 - Specific improvements for each partner; and
 - Accountability plan for follow-up.





IX. After-action Review (Cont'd.)

Considerations for after-action reviews

- Best time for a review may not necessarily be *immediately* after the exercise is conducted
- A skilled facilitator is important
- Any tension amongst those present must be constructive

Benefits of after-action reviews

- Supports proactive response management
- Provides documentation for any future litigation
- Identifies areas for improvement





IX. After-action Review (Cont'd.)

After-action reviews vs. “hot wash”

- **After-action review:** Term for a thorough debrief and evaluation after an event to capture key lessons learned from emergency response and make recommendations for improvements.
- **Hot wash:** Term for a brief meeting shortly after an event intended to capture major reflection or explanations of actions.





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- X. Share common exercise mistakes





X. Common Exercise Mistakes

- Scenarios are not unique or tailored to the local area.
- Scenarios are too complex for the Local Education Agency (LEA) to manage successfully.
- Timing of the exercise is inadequate.
- No accurate critique of the exercise afterwards.
- Safety issues are not addressed properly.
- Exercise is planned and initiated too quickly.
- Some critical agencies are not included.
- After-action items are not implemented.





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XI. Resources

The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Exercise Development and Design Courses Online Training

- IS120a – An Introduction to Exercises
- IS130 – Exercise Evaluation and Improvement Planning
- IS139 – Exercise Design
- <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/>

Georgia Emergency Management Agency's (GEMA) *"Education for Disaster"* DVD

- <http://www.gema.state.ga.us>

Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program

<http://www.hseep.dhs.gov/>





XI. Resources (Cont'd.)

REMS Technical Assistance Center publications

- *Emergency Exercises: An Effective Way to Validate School Safety Plans*
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/Emergency_NewsletterV2I3.pdf
- *Planning and Conducting a Functional Exercise*
http://rems.ed.gov/views/documents/HH_EmergencyExeMarch20th.pdf





Presentation Credits

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- **Steve Harris**, Director, Office of Security and Emergency Preparedness, University of Georgia (Athens); and
- **Matt Taylor**, Associate Director, Montana Safe Schools Center at The University of Montana (Missoula).

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